

Providing Student Book Choice

Using student engagement to
increase achievement.



Character

Do any of the characters display the trait of honesty?

Were you surprised by the actions of any of the characters? How?

Describe a decision or choice made by one of the characters? Do you agree with this decision?

Who is the protagonist of the book? How do you know?



Character

Who is the antagonist of the book? How do you know?

What actions of one of the characters confused you?

How would the book be different if told from another character's point of view?

Does the protagonist force the antagonist to change? If so, why and how?

Describe the appearance of your favorite characters.



Character

If you have to choose to be one of the characters, who would you chose? Why?

Does one of the characters remind you of someone that you know? Why?

How would you feel if you were one of the characters in the book? Explain.

How do the actions of the character tell you about his/her personality?

Create a new problem for one of the characters.



Character

Describe the scene in the book when a character's thoughts differ from his/her actions? Why do you think this happened?

How would the characters behave differently if the story were set in a different place or time?

Compare two characters in this book. Tell which one you think is a better person and why?



Character

How does the setting of the book influence the characters?

Which character in the book faces the biggest problem? Why?

Tell one event of the story from another character's point of view (besides the narrator).

What trait did you admire most in a character in the story? Why?



Character

If you could change the behaviors of any character, which one would you change? Why?

Would you like the main character as a best friend? What qualities does the character display that lead you to that decision?

Did the main character (protagonist) change during the story or did he/she stay the same throughout?

Would you want to read other books about these characters? Why?



Character

How does the personality of one character contribute to his or her eventual success or failure?

Who narrates the book? Why do you think the author made this choice?

Describe two events that portray the main character's personality?

Order the story characters from your favorite to your least favorite.

If you had been one of the characters would you have done anything differently?



Character

If you could eliminate one character from the story, whom would you choose? What effect would that have?

What gift would you like to give the main character? Why?

How might you rewrite the story to include one of your friends as a character?

If you were the author, what future events or discoveries would you have the characters pursue?

How does the main character stand out from other characters?



Plot: Basics

What do you think was the most important event in the story?

Where and when does the story take place?

Who are the main characters? What makes them the main characters?

What has happened in the story so far?

What is the problem or main situation in the story?



Plot

If you could choose one scene in the book to draw or illustrate, which would you choose? What colors would you use? Why?

Can you summarize the story in:

- 25 words or fewer;
- 10 words or fewer; and
- 5 words or fewer.

If you were to visit the setting of the story, what might you see there?



Plot

To whom might you recommend this book? Is there a particular group or population that you believe would enjoy this book?

Does the book have any value beyond entertainment?

How has the book influenced your viewpoint?

What one thing would you tell the author to change about the plot if you were to write to him or her?



Plot

What problem exists in this book? How is it solved?

Would this book work as a movie? What might have to be changed?

What do you consider the strongest part of the book? The weakest?

What did you learn from this book?



Plot

What do you think is the most important event in the story? What is the least important event in the story?

List the characteristics of a good story. Which ones apply to this story?

Could you sometimes predict what was going to happen next in the book? Did it help you to better understand the story?

Identify words in the story that the author used to help you create a picture of the story in your mind.



Plot

Would you change the ending if you could? If so, what changes would you make? Why?

Why do you think the author wrote this story?

How do you think the following people would react to this story:

- someone in your family
- a friend
- your teacher

Did you enjoy the way the story began? Explain.



Plot

Do you think the topic of this story is important?

What does the title mean? How is it important to the story?

How are the events in the story similar to the events in your own life?

Did the author of this book have an important point to make? Was this an interesting story?

Do you think there is any lesson to be learned from this story? Why or why not?



Plot

Explain a problem faced by one of the characters. How was it solved?

Describe any part of the plot that confused you.

Which scene would make a good preview, or trailer, for a movie?

What was the turning point of the story? How did it affect the plot?

Is the plot true to life (realistic)?

Did you feel any suspense in the plot? If so, what was the final outcome?



Setting

What three words would you use to describe the setting of the story?

Why is the setting of this book an appropriate place for this story to take place?

What are some alternative settings that could have been used for this book?

How might the author have collected information about the setting for this book?



Setting

In what way does the setting of this story relate to your life or to other books you have read?

Do you think the setting for this story was real or imaginary? Why?

How would the book change if the setting was 100 years in the future or 100 years in the past?

What details does the author provide about the setting that helps build the mood for the story?



Illustrations

What media did the illustrator use? Did this help tell the story better?

Could the illustrations in the book tell the same story without the words? Why or why not?

What colors does the illustrator use to tell the story? Why might he or she have chosen these colors?



Illustrations & Layout

How did the illustrations and/or diagrams help clarify the information?

How do the illustrations or page layouts differ from other books you have read? Which format is better? Why?

What information did you learn from the captions or illustrations?

What text features (diagrams, charts, tables) do you find most intriguing? Why?

Would this book be as good without the illustrations? Why or Why not?



Illustrations & Layouts

Did the illustrations or page layout in this book make you want to read further? Why?

What part of the book first attracted your attention? Why?

What do the illustrations tell about the setting/time period?

What parts of the book or story might have inspired the illustrator? Why?

Do the illustrations make you think of a special place or event in your life? Explain.

Based only on the illustrations (not the words), what would you think the book is about?



Biography

What obstacles did this person face? How did these obstacles influence his or her life?

Who do you think influenced this individual's early years?

What ethical issues did the individual face?

What character traits did you admire most in this person? Why?

How much did this person have a teacher's influence on him or her? If you had been the teacher, how would you want to influence this individual?



Biography

Why would an author write a biography about this individual?

What additional questions do you have about this person and his/her experience that this book did not answer?

How is this person's life different from your own? How is it similar?

What does the person about whom the biography is written value? Do you value similar things? Why or why not?



Biography

How did the author organize events in this individual's life? What event do you believe was the most significant in the individual's life?

Compare/contrast your family's culture with the culture of the main character.

In most biographies, the person has to overcome some difficulty. Describe an obstacle the person overcame.

What did you learn about yourself while reading this biography?

How would you describe the "star" of this biography? What traits did he or she possess that you relate to?



Biography

If you were going to write a biography, who would you write about? Why?

What details would you include in your biography and why?

What characteristics of the person would you like to develop yourself? Why?

What do you think school was like for the person about whom this biography was written? Explain.



Theme: General Questions

Is the author trying to help you better understand some aspect of life?

Can you identify the author's message in writing this book?

Explain how a theme in this book relates to your own life.

What lessons do the characters in the story learn from their experiences?

Describe an event in this book that helped you understand the "big idea" or theme in the story.

Does the theme change the main character?



Theme: Personal Beliefs

Every person should have a set of personal beliefs in life. At some time in life, you may have to stand up for what you believe is right. Sometimes we do not really know or understand our beliefs until we are confronted with a hard choice or a bad event.

Explain how the idea of personal beliefs is a theme in this book.

Do any of the main characters appear to have a strong set of personal beliefs? Explain.

For the character in this story, is there any belief he/she would sacrifice for?



Theme: Interaction with Nature

Different people relate to nature in different ways. Some people, such as Native American Indians, relate differently to nature than others. Americans may relate differently to nature today than they did in the past.

Does the theme of people relating to nature appear in the book you are reading?

How do the characters in this book relate to nature?



Theme: Death

What big idea may be worth dying for? Examples could include freedom or the life of another person you love. Death may sometimes keep a character from understanding life. Some people think death is not the end, but rather the beginning. Death certainly does not end a person's legacy or contribution to the lives of others.

How did the theme of death emerge in this book?

Do any of the main characters die? If so, what big ideas do you learn about death from the events in this book?



Theme: Personal Beliefs

One important theme relates to good and evil. Early events in our history and culture suggest the existence of some good and/or evil in most people.

How does the battle between good and evil exist in this book?

Does good triumph over evil in this book? How?

Do you think good usually triumphs over evil? Why?

Can you think of an event in your life or in the world in which evil seemed to triumph over good?



Theme: Power

Power can relate to personal/individual power, institutional power (in work or government), or spiritual power to believe in forces that are bigger than ourselves.

Do authors have power? What is the power of the pen?

Do you think that authors have responsibility to use their power to make positive changes? Why?

Does a person with personal or individual power have the right to use it for evil? Explain.

Does any character in this book use his/her power for good? Explain.



Theme: Change or Growth in Life

Challenges or difficulties can make people stronger. People who don't feel like they belong or fit in may face problems. When some people face challenges, they can become stronger and more resourceful.

The only constant in life is change. Do you know what that means as a theme in a book? Is that a theme in this book?

Does the theme of this book relate to the theme of a person's place in society?

Do any characters in this book feel as though they don't belong? Why?

Do any characters change during the book? How?



Theme: Change or Growth in Life

People need internal (within themselves) strength to deal with sad or difficult times. Developing inner strength may take a lifetime of work. Many characters find it difficult to develop inner strength.

Does a character in this book go through a change or growth in life? How?

Do you think that any character in this book is stronger on the inside than on the outside? Who and why?

Are there any characters that are weaker on the inside than the outside? Who and why?



Theme: Relationships

Friendships and loving relationships can make life better. Friends share and give to each other. Some people are kind and giving to others. Some people are unkind and cruel to each other. Relationships are often a theme in literature.

Is the theme of relationships portrayed in this story?

Are there any events in this book that teach you about cruelty? If so, what lessons do you learn from those events?

Do any of the main characters teach you something about kindness or friendship? Explain.



Theme: Relationships

When people work with others, they need to have good communication and feel respect for others. More can be accomplished when people work together than when they work alone.

How do you think personal relationships are portrayed in this book?

Do any of the characters work together to solve a problem? If so, what big ideas do you learn from the events of this book?

Is there any event in the book that shows how some people hurt relationships? If so, what lessons can you learn from that event?



Theme: Loneliness and Isolation

Isolation and loneliness can hurt people. Isolated and lonely people may also hurt others. All people have a need to feel cared for and loved by someone. Scott O'Dell once said, "History has a very valid connection with what we are now. Many of my books are set in the past, but the problems of isolation, moral decisions, greed, need for love and affection are problems of today as well...."

Is loneliness and isolation a theme of this book?

Do any of the characters in this book feel isolated or alone? Why? How could you help them?



Theme: Inhumanity

Some people are cruel and treat others very badly. Understanding others may help to reduce cruelty and inhumanity to others.

What does it mean to really understand others?

Do inhumanity and cruelty exist in the world today? What could each of us do to reach out to prevent it?

Is inhumanity and cruelty to others a theme in this book?

Does anyone help the character who is treated unkindly? How?



Experiments

What would happen if you deleted a step or changed the order of the steps in the experiment?

Summarize this experiment for a friend in a way that would make him/her want to do it.

What variables could you manipulate to add to your knowledge of the topic?



Experiments

How could you apply the procedures of this experiment to a different subject for research?

How else could you modify the experiment to extend your learning?

What concepts in science does this experiment teach?

Do you think that you would get the same results each time if you repeated the experiment 25 times? Why or why not?



Fairy Tales

Is this fairy tale similar to other fairy tales you have read? How are they similar?

A fractured fairy tale takes a traditional fairy tale and changes it in some way. For example, the main character may be changed from male to female, or the setting may be updated to modern times. If you were going to "fracture" this fairy tale, how would you do it? Why?

Have you read other versions of this fairy tale? Do any of them come from other cultures? How did they differ from this one?



Fairy Tales

How would this fairy tale be different if it was told from another character's perspective?

What lesson do you think the author is teaching with this tale? How do you know?

If this fairy tale was made into a movie, to whom would it appeal most? Why?

Fairy tales are usually about good versus evil. What two forces are contrasted in this story?



Fairy Tales

What other fairy tales does this story remind you of?

What is the problem in this fairy tale and how do you think it will be solved?

Are there characters in this fairy tale that remind you of characters in other stories? Who and what traits make them similar?

If you could play one of the characters in the movie version of this fairy tale, who would you be? Why?



Fairy Tales

Fairy tales often feature the numbers 3 and 7 (the three billy goats, the seven dwarfs, the wolf who tries to blow down the pigs' houses 3 times). Do these numbers have any significance in this tale? If so, how do they influence the story?

Did any character have a magical power? What was the power? How would the story change if a different character had the power?

Does this fairy tale have any characters that are from royalty (for example, a king or princess)? How are they different from other characters?



Fables

Think about the characters in this fable. What are the best and worst traits the main characters possess? Which trait wins in the end?

What is a moral or lesson to be learned from this fable?

What can you learn about human feelings or behavior from the characters in this fable?

How does the setting influence or contribute to the conflict or resolution of this fable? How would the story change if the fable was set in a different place or time?



Folklore, Myths, & Legends

Picture the main character from this story. How did the author help you create a visual image in your mind?

What traits of this character make him/her have super abilities or powers?

Is this story believable? What has been exaggerated?

In what way would the story be different without the exaggeration?

If you could meet the main character what questions would you ask?

What would it be like to live in the place or during the time of this story?



Fantasy/Science Fiction

Do you think this kind of story could ever happen in real life? Why or why not?

Imagine if we had the creatures/gadgets/modes of transportation in our society that are in the book. How would your life be different?

If you could add a creature/gadgets/mode of transportation/etc. to this story, what would it be? What would change in the story?

Do you have any ideas for an invention that would make this story better? Describe your idea and how it would change the story?



Self-Help

What kind of helpful "self-help" strategies does this book provide?

What kind of evidence does the author provide to suggest that his/her strategies are effective for others?

After reading this book, what other books would you like to read?

Did this book help you? Why or why not?



Self-Help

Why did you select this book to read? What questions did you have when you started to read the book? Were your questions answered?

If you were going to write a self-help book for other kids, what would it be about?

Can you think of a fictional character that might benefit from reading this book? In what way would he/she benefit?

Did this book help you see things from a different perspective? Was it helpful?



Mysteries

Think about the protagonist in the story. What are his/her good and bad traits? How do these traits help or hurt the protagonist when solving the mystery?

How would reading this story be different if you knew the solution before you started reading?

Compare yourself to the character investigating the mystery. What traits do you have in common? What traits are different?

After you finish reading this book, think about the conclusion. Was the ending as you expected?



Mysteries

How do you know that this book is a mystery (besides the label on the book)?

What clues has the author given so far to help you solve the mystery at this point in the story?

Have you decided that any characters are "innocent"? Why do you think so? Provide evidence from the story.

Do you think the author will reveal "who did it" by the end of the story or will you have to be the one to decide? What information do you need in order to solve the mystery?



Mysteries

A "red herring" is a suspect (or object) that the author adds to take some of the suspicion away from the person who really committed the crime. Describe any red herrings in the story?

Have you decided that any characters are guilty? Why do you think so? Provide evidence from the story?

If you were investigating this mystery, what steps would you take to uncover the truth?

Would you ever read the ending of a mystery first? Why or why not?



Humor

What makes a story humorous or a comedy?

What would have made this story even funnier? Why?

Which character do you think has the best sense of humor? Why?

Is there one character who has "no" sense of humor at all? If so, how does that character interact with the other characters?

Does the use of humor make this story more enjoyable? Why or why not?



Humor

If you had a conversation with a character from the book what character would it be? What would you talk about? What would you ask him/her?

What makes this comedy different from a joke book? What benefits or strengths does this book have over a joke book?

Is this book similar to other books you have read? How?

How would you respond if you witnessed one of the humorous scenes from this book?

How does the author use humor to define a character in the book? Why is this character funny?



Philosophy

Have you changed any of your ideas based on reading this book?

Does the author have a main point in this book? What is it?

Did the author try to persuade you to agree with his/her beliefs? If so, how?

What kind of support does the author give for his/her arguments?

How is the information the same or different from you own beliefs?



Poetry

From whose perspective is the poem written? Who might be narrating the poem?

What moves you in the poem?
The language? The images?

Select a phrase from the poem that caught your attention while you were reading. Do you think the author did this on purpose? Why or why not?

What do you know about the narrator's or character's feelings based on this poem?

What visual images come to mind when you read this poem?



Poetry

How would this poem change if the narrator was different?

If you turned this poem into a song, what kind of music would you use? Why?

What kind of illustration do you think would be appropriate for this poem?

What two emotions did you feel while reading any poem in this book? Did your emotions change as you read other poems?

How would the impact of this poem change if it had been written as prose?



Poetry

How does the poet's choice of words influence the visual images in your mind while you read?

How does the poet use rhythm to convey meaning in this poem?

How would this poem be different if it were written in a different poetic style? For example, as a limerick instead of haiku?

What does any poem that you choose to read aloud sound like?

Does the poem remind you of a book you have read?



Non-Fiction

How could an idea in this book improve or change the world?

Describe some professions that relate to this topic. What kinds of work do these people do?

How is this book organized? - Date, time of year, place, alphabetically, step by step. Why do you think the author organized the material this way?

How might this book change if it had been written by an author of the opposite gender, a different age, or a different cultural heritage?



Non-Fiction

Can you identify one cause/effect relationship from events in the book?

Describe an interesting relationship in this book.

How effectively did the author present different perspectives on an issue?

How do the ideas in this book relate to your life?

What would have improved this book? Why?



Non-Fiction

Would this book be a good choice to include in a time capsule? Why or why not?

Bias happens when the author presents only one point of view on a topic that may have two or more important viewpoints. Do you think bias exists in this book? Why or why not?

How did the Table of Contents and Index help you to use this book? What improvements could you make?

What events in history did this book help you understand?



Non-Fiction

How do you think the author learned the information presented in this book?

What is the most important idea the author is conveying about the topic?

What are three details the author used to make readers more interested in this topic?

Why do you think the author chose to write about this topic? Do you think the topic is important?

After reading this book, do you want to delve into this topic more deeply? What other books might you find? Where?



Non-Fiction

Why might a non-fiction book have more than one author? Why is collaboration important in this type of writing?

What part of this book could the author have left out without changing your understanding of the topic?

Compare what you learned in this book with what you already knew or thought you knew about the topic.

What is one big question you still have after reading the book?



Non-Fiction

If you had to make an advertisement about the topic of this non-fiction book, what would you do?

What sections of the book would you want to read first? Why?

What questions would you want to ask the author after reading the book? Why are the questions important?

What would you tell the author about a student's understanding of this topic?

How do you read a non-fiction book differently from a fiction book?



Non-Fiction

Is everything in the book based on fact? Does the author provide opinions? How can you tell the difference between fact and opinions?

How did the pictures and the words in the book help you create an image of the setting?

How would you find another book on the same topic? Would you want to read it? Why or why not?



Non-Fiction

Would you have wanted to live during the time that is the setting of the book? Why or why not?

When the author writes, what elements of his/her writing help you understand the important facts or ideas in the books?

Have you read a book on this topic before? If so, how is this book different? How is it similar?

Is the author an expert on the subject? How do you know?



Non-Fiction

Does the author of this book try to persuade you to believe anything? How?

Can you imagine how people dressed during this time or in this place? How would you describe the differences between the clothes in the book and what you wear?

Do you think people read non-fiction books to answer questions that they have? What steps might they take to find answers?



Non-Fiction

Are there places in this book you have visited before? How might visiting the places in the book improve your understanding of the events in the book?

What does this book make you think about? Do questions come to mind? Give an example of some of your thoughts or questions.

What about the setting of this book is different from the world we live in now?



Non-Fiction & Fiction

If you were to write a follow up to this book, what part of this book would you like to research in more depth?

Who is the most memorable person in the book?

Describe the author's writing style. What is his/her narrative style, for example?

What questions do you now have about the time period in which the events occurred?

What would the world be like if the events in this book had not happened?



How-To Books

What sections of this book did you want to read first? Why? What would the other sections provide?

What recommendations would you give the author for improving this book?

What would your greatest challenge be in doing what the author recommends?

Do you need any special resources or tools to follow the directions in the book?



Inventions & How-to Books

How would this modern invention have affected another era in history?

How would your life today be different if the invention had not been created at that time?

In this how-to book, what steps might you change to improve the process?

What would it have been like to experience the first successful trial of this invention?

How did this book help you learn a skill you are interested in pursuing?



Understanding Audience

What other topics or ideas might people who like this book be interested in?

Describe the type of person who might be most interested in this topic.

Do you think people who read this book will be sympathetic to the main character? Why or why not?



Understanding Audience

Would you recommend this book to a favorite fictional character? Which one? Why?

What was the author's purpose in writing this book? Was the author successful? Why or why not?

Who is the intended audience of the book? How do you know?

Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not?



Exploration Books

Have you read any fiction books that deal with this topic in the book? After reading this book, do you think the fiction book treated the content accurately?

Look at the format of the book. What other topics could be covered using this format? What non-fiction topics would **not** be appropriately covered in this format?

Suggest a plot for a piece of fiction in which this information plays a pivotal role.

Are there any opinions presented in this book that look like facts that you believe are really opinions? How can you tell what is really accurate?



History & Current Events

How is the issue/problem/topic relevant to your world today?

Compare your family's culture with the one you read about.

If you were to rewrite the ending of this book, could you change history?

How might you feel about the events in this book if you were living in this time period?

What person/group of people in this book faced the most challenges? Why?

What would happen if the events in this book had happened 200 years later? How might the events have changed?



Reading Attitudes

Do you ever reread a book? If so, why do you read it again?

Imagine that reading was never invented. Would this be a good thing or a bad thing? Why?

Do you like to get books as presents? Why or why not? Have your feelings about this changed at all since the beginning of the school year?



Reading Attitudes

Complete this sentence: Reading helps me...

What is the most difficult thing for you to do while reading? Can the teacher or anyone else help you with this? How?

What do you like most about reading? What do you like least?

Is reading important to you? Why or why not?

What new strategies are you using that have helped you become a better reader? How have they helped?

Describe how you feel when reading.



Reading Attitudes

Do you have a favorite author? If so, who is the author and why do you like the books he/she writes? If not, why do you think you have not found an author you like?

Do you have a favorite genre? Which one and why? If not, what would help you like books more?

What do you know about yourself as a reader? How has this changed since last month? Last year?

Where and when do you like to read best? How does knowing this help you choose books to read?

What helps you get interested in a book? How does this help you choose books?



Reading Attitudes

Complete this sentence: To me, reading is...

If you could choose anything to read about, what would you choose and why?

Do you and your friends talk about books or reading? Why or why not?

Have you ever seen a movie made from a book you read? If so, which did you enjoy more, the book or the movie? Why?

What helps you understand books better?



Just the Facts

A **character** is an imaginary person represented in a novel, poem, short story, or any other fiction book.

A **simile** is a comparison of two unlike things, typically marked by use of "like", "as" or "than". Examples include "the snow was as thick as a blanket", or "she was as sly as a fox".

A **metaphor** uses an implied comparison or analogy to describe something. In the simplest case, a metaphor takes the form: "The *[first subject]* is a *[second subject]*." We use metaphors regularly in daily life: "She's such a peach" would be an example.



Just the Facts

The time and location of the story is called **setting**. There are several aspects to the setting of each story the place/geographic location, the time/date, and the mood/atmosphere.

An **antagonist** is a character or sometimes a group of characters that actively oppose the main character or **protagonist** of a story. Usually the antagonist represents a force that the main character must overcome.

Plot is the plan of action for a play, novel, poem, short story, or any other fiction book.



Just the Facts

Fairy tales are stories told to entertain and instruct about good and evil. They often include supernatural beings, magic and royalty. They usually take place long ago and far away.

A **fable** is a fictitious story or tale, intended to teach about a truth, human emotion or behavior. Fables usually have a lesson or moral to be learned. Animals are often used in place of people in fables.

A **mystery** is a fictional story in which a detective solves a crime or mysterious event. The detective uses clues in the story to solve the mystery.



Just the Facts

Folklore is a collection of stories from a particular culture and time, and often features exaggeration. A myth is a story about mythical or supernatural beings or events. A legend is a story handed down from earlier times, often believed to be historical.

Fantasy is fiction that asks the reader to suspend reality and believe that elements of magic, wizardry, and supernatural events are possible. It often takes place in another world or time. Science fiction is a story that takes place in the future, where people use scientific and technological developments in amazing ways.



Just the Facts

Self-help books give advice to help people solve problems or accomplish things in their life.

Philosophy is the love of knowledge. Philosophers think about life and develop ideas or beliefs about life, knowledge or behavior.

Non-fiction books are often based on true stories, history, facts, or ideas and are used to share information.

Types of non-fiction books:

- Poetry
- Plays/Narrative based on real life
- Biography
- Photo documentaries
- How-to Books
- Experiment & Activity Books
- Field Guides & Identification Books



Just the Facts

A **theme** can be defined as the major message the author wants readers to have about an important issue or idea.

Most books have a theme and in each theme are some important ideas called "big ideas".

Types of themes in books:

- Power
- Change or Growth in Life
- Interaction with Nature
- Death
- Personal Beliefs
- Relationships
- Loneliness and Isolation
- Inhumanity